

15 May 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Product Review Division

SUBJECT: Talking Paper on Preparation and Dissemination of
the RONI

25X1 1. This paper is based on a review of the Minutes of the USIB Meeting of 28 February, at which RONI was discussed, the Memo for the Record drawn up by [] who attended that meeting, and subsequent correspondence to the IC Staff concerning the RONI.

2. The only explicit directive from USIB is that subsequent editions of the RONI "would be prepared taking into consideration the suggestions and comments from the USIB Principals." But these suggestions are to some degree mutually exclusive, which means that the IC Staff probably should make some adjustments to trim areas of overlap.

3. There is general agreement with the point made by both Dr. Proctor and Mr. Morell at USIB that evaluation of the intelligence product should reflect the consumers' views rather than merely the opinions of intelligence officers. But the two men differ on how the consumers' views are to be communicated to those preparing the RONI. Dr. Proctor "suggested" that the reviews on geographic and topical areas be "vetted" to the appropriate NIOs, since the NIOs are in the "best" position to obtain consumer reaction. General Wilson agreed to this "procedure." But for Mr. Morell, who urges that the RONI present "candidly" the criticisms and proposals of policy-making officials, the NSCIC Working Group, rather than the NIOs, is the preferable channel.

25X1 4. Temporarily there is no way to bridge this difference, in view of Dr. Proctor's other suggestion, namely that the distribution of the next issue of the RONI be limited to USIB Principals. [] recorded Dr. Proctor as saying "the next edition or two" rather than "next issue"). Only Mr. Morell is both a USIB Principal and a member of the NSCIC Working Group. Only he would be certain to see the RONI in any case.

25X1 5. Secondly, there is an implicit and unresolved difference of view on the role of the NIOs vis-a-vis the RONI. In his comments at USIB Dr. Proctor obviously intended that the NIOs review RONI sections before publication. Moreover in subsequent correspondence between [] the IC Staff offered to submit its RONI sections to pre-publication review by the NIOs. But interestingly enough, the NIOs themselves have not specifically asked for pre-publication review. Moreover there are several indications that others in USIB would object to it.

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6. Specifically, Mr. Morell is recorded by [] as having said that "one of the biggest weaknesses in our intelligence analysis is our incestuous critiques." In Morell's view the last edition of the RONI was too self-congratulatory. The State representative at the USIB Meeting recommended better identification of the RONI "reviewers." So too did the Chief of the China/Far East Division of DIA/DE, who asked in a subsequent memorandum, "Who are all these anonymous people?" That he may already have framed an answer to that question is suggested by the fact that the memorandum was addressed to "Editor of the Review of National Intelligence, CIA."

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7. In addition, in comments forwarded from Admiral Rectanus to General Wilson on 28 March DASD people faulted what they perceived as "self-praise" of the reviewers. In his response of 11 April, General Wilson acknowledged that some RONI readers, unaware of the IC Staff's structure and charter, in effect accused us of being CIA reviewers reviewing CIA products.

8. This line of criticism is liable to be heard more often if the NIOs are seen to be taking an active role in the preparation of product reviews. We have been instructed by the DCI to broaden the scope of the review beyond serial publications, to include products issued under the aegis of the NIOs. We have begun to respond to this instruction, as can be seen in the RONI now being compiled. Some people are bound to object to even the restrained intervention of the NIOs in this pre-publication period. Whenever the reviewed review the reviews, someone is likely to call this "incestuous."

9. The solution then, might lie in devising another arrangement for the RONIs after "the next edition or two." Let the NIOs take the published RONI and use it as a means for eliciting consumer feedback. They do not have to assume responsibility for the accuracy or the pertinence of what is said in the RONI. Let them add whatever comments or criticisms they choose to make. It will all go into the subsequent issue. And, eventually, let the consumers have an opportunity to comment directly, not just through the NIOs. The aim of the RONI is improvement of product through constructive criticism (and praise). Improvement is a gradual process, never completed, and there are bound to be several minds about the process itself. The RONI is an instrument of continual dialogue, not a definitive, perfected statement.

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